

Bill to Simplify Public Documents Now Becomes Law

Washington, DC –Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) announced today President Barack Obama signed the *Plain Writing Act of 2010* (H.R. 946) into law late Wednesday afternoon. The bill, introduced by Braley, requires the federal government to write documents, such as tax returns, federal college aid applications, and Veterans Administration forms in simple easy-to-understand language, making government more transparent and saving the government millions of dollars. The bill's final version passed the House by a vote of 341-82. Earlier this week, it received unanimous consent in the Senate.

"The Plain Writing Act requires a simple change to business-as-usual that'll make a big difference for anyone who's ever filled out a tax return or received a government document," Braley said. "This bill shows what bipartisanship can accomplish when we put aside our differences and work together for the common good. Writing government documents in plain language will increase government accountability and will save Americans time and money. Plain, straightforward language makes it easy for taxpayers to understand what the federal government is doing and what services it is offering."

Braley visited the VA in Bettendorf on Tuesday to highlight the work already underway at the Veterans Benefits Administration, which is one of few federal agencies to track the use of Plain Language in federal documents. After rewriting just one letter asking beneficiaries to update their contact information in Plain Language, the VBA saw responses climb 75 percent, saving the VA approximately \$8 million in follow-up costs.

The *Plain Writing Act* requires the federal government to write new publications, forms, and publicly distributed documents in a "clear, concise, well-organized" manner that follows the best practices of plain language writing.

After the bill passed the House in February, Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) placed a hold on the bill for months, so Braley requested a meeting with him in June. After making minor changes, Bennett lifted his hold and the bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent.